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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0206
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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREF](#) [CT](#)
SUBJECT: FLEEING VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN CONGO, NEW REFUGEES APPEAR IN
THE CAR

REF: A. A - 09 BRAZZAVILLE 345 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)B. REF: B - 09 BANGUI 247

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: A new flow of refugees into the remote southwestern prefecture of the Lobaye in the Central African Republic (CAR) is the latest in a series of humanitarian tragedies to hit the country this year. The latest census conducted on 14 December 2009 by a joint assessment mission composed of WFP, HCR and a Dakar-based USAID/Food-for-Peace Officer reported a caseload of 15,000 Congolese refugees spread among five camps along the Oubangui River that marks the boundary between CAR and DRC. The mission also reported that the number of refugees was expected to increase as more refugees continued to arrive on a daily basis. Over 45 percent of the refugees are under 18 years of age. The refugee camps are located in a densely forested area about 160 km from Bangui. However, most of the camps, except one, can be reached and served by road and boat. These refugees fled conflict in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Ref A), and the new influx poses significant logistical challenges to relief efforts and places fresh strains on the already overburdened UN system in CAR. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) As a result of conflict in DRC, Congolese refugees began arriving in the Lobaye prefecture of CAR on November 27, 2009 from towns and villages in the northwestern areas of the Equator Province. According to a joint UN/FFP mission, there are no wounded or reports of kidnapping, rape victims or victims of other violence reported among the refugees. The refugees apparently abandoned their areas of origin to proactively avoid conflict and dangers they feared were eminently approaching. The refugees in the camp cited the following as root causes for their displacement:

-- Interethnic conflict over fishing rights in the village of Dongo, DRC.

-- A mystico-military movement headed by a young man named Roger Odjani who has been fighting the Congolese army (FARDC).

-- Fear of reprisals by the FARDC.

-- The alleged fleeing from Libenge by some DRC government figures and their families.

¶3. (U) According to reports from one of the five camps, local authorities in the DCR town of Libenge have called upon the refugees to return to the town as the conflict is not headed as far north as the border with the CAR. Never the less, there is no sign that people are returning. There are ethnic and familial ties on both sides of the border and, according to the UN, the refugees are well aware of benefits of remaining refugees versus returning to DRC as internally displaced persons. According to observers, many refugees farm on the DRC side during the day and return to the Central African side at night.

¶4. (U) For some, this is the third or fourth time they have sought refuge in the CAR, having suffered through numerous regional upheavals. They brought with them livestock, clothing, and some food provisions. As it stands, the most critical and immediate needs are shelter, healthcare and water and sanitation services. However, food will become a major priority as refugees exhaust their food stocks. The principle medical issues, particularly among the young children, are diarrhea, malaria, and respiratory illness.

¶5. (U) The local populations living in the villages and towns around the refugee camps such as Mongoumba and Zinga are outnumbered ten to one by the refugees. As a result, in a region not accustomed to this many people, the competition for the use

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of the local resources may not only be a source of serious damage to the local environment but a potential source of conflicts between the host population and the refugees. There are currently no major problems in accessing most of the refugee's location by road or by boat, with the exception of one camp where aid workers need to walk some 45 minutes through dense forest to reach it.

¶6. (SBU) The CARG has so far tolerated the presence of these new refugees and sent along several local government officials on the UN assessment mission. The USAID/FFP Officer who accompanied the assessment mission did note, though, that the CARG wants the refugees out of the CAR by April - the same time as the scheduled national elections.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: As discussed in Ref B, the humanitarian crisis in the CAR continues to worsen due to:

-- An increased number of internally displacement of people as a result of renewed fighting between CARG forces and armed militias in the northeast,

-- Increasing numbers of refugees from the DRC and increased insecurity which is significantly limiting humanitarian agencies' ability to deliver services/assistance to the people in need (Ref B).

Neither the CARG nor the UN agencies has the additional resources required for the assistances and services needed by the current influx of Congolese refugees. Therefore, Post strongly recommends that USG increases its contributions to the humanitarian operations in the CAR. END COMMENT.

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